

## Selections.

GERRIT SMITH TO GEORGE THOMPSON.

ENGLAND NEEDS TO SOOTHE AMERICA.

PETERBURG, January 25, 1862.

Hon. George Thompson, Ex-Member British Parliament.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have read your recent Speech on "American Slavery and the present Crisis."

Not to speak of their merits, they show great knowledge of American affairs, and treat of them

very temperately and judiciously.

It is well that you employed your rich and commanding eloquence to prevent England from making

war upon America. I hope you will now employ it to prevent America from making war upon

England. You need not come here for this purpose.

Say where you are, and labor with others to bring your Government and people to such a sense of the

present danger, that they will not be so easily misled by the deep wrong against them, as shall

serve to take from the American heart the hatred of England which rankles in it. I refer in this

wrong to nothing else than what has grown out of the Trent matter; for nothing else has made up any

part of it. It is true that there was a sore displeasure with England for her sympathy with the rebels; but this sympathy might not have been

so general as to make England responsible for it. Or it might have been more seeming than real. Or, if it

was indeed real, nevertheless, it was not an offense of the grade or character to get angry with.

I have implied, predicted that America will declare war against England, unless England shall prevent it. I scarcely need say that this prediction

comes not of my wishes. I love England more than I love any other nation, save my own. I cannot

help the preference. A common language, language and literature are sufficient to account for it. Her

scholars, scholars, philosophers, poets and novelists feel to be my own. And whilst many say that her oppression of Ireland, and her forcing of opium on the Chinese, are just worthy of her, I view

this to be unworthy of her. The emancipation of her slaves—that was an act worthy of her greatness and glory. I said that I love her. I said that my countrymen loved her. The tears they shed for her

when she was struggling with her horrid East India Rebellion were sincere. The welcome they gave her young Prince, for his own sake, for his good Mother's sake, and for dear old England's sake also, was unaffected and cordial. Moreover, I am opposed to war; and by war I mean the bloody collision of nation with nation. Every such collision I hold to be unnecessary and wrong, both on one side and the other. In no case may a nation declare war; and she may safely conclude that the moral power of her calm but unyielding refusal to arm herself against a declaration of war will protect her from it. Again, should it turn out that there are nations so low in civilization, and so insensible to restraining and reclaiming influences, as to ignore or break through this power and fall upon her, nevertheless, there would be far more and firmer ground for her resistance to her. These would not only honor her for her peace principles, but they would be prompt to resist every mean and guilty attempt to take advantage of them. Our poor war-cursed world waits for a nation to take this attitude. The nation so truthful in truth as to say, "I will find it not less safe than sublime, and will be followed in quick succession by her sister nations."

I should be opposed to war, and yet be in sympathy with our large Northern armies, may possibly be an inconsistency. Believing, however, as I do, that the duty of Government to control its subjects, I am conscious of no inconsistency between my opposition to war, and my sympathy with armies however large, if their sole object is the quelling of domestic insurrections. If Russia were willing to send unarmed France from armed England, it is by no means follows that she would, on any principle, be willing to employ her forces in subduing a French Republic. France must take care of her own rebels. Every nation must, like every family, govern itself. The nation or family which cannot, had better be broken up.

That whilst my loyal countrymen have, with scarce an exception, a stinging sense of this wrong done by England to America, I have not a comparative handful of them unqualifiedly opposed to war, fully justify my strong fear that America will make war upon England.

It is strange that they should have this stinging sense to men, they must have it. The Trent had made itself, both in deed and spirit, part and parcel of the great American Republic. The owner and agent and all her officers, including the Commander Williams, had knowledge of the assumed characters and purposes of the traitors whom she took on board. She was doing what they could to help on their mission of death to their country. And all this in the face of the Queen's proclamation, and in the face, too, of the punishment which the English Government had inflicted for the like offences when we were at war with Mexico. The San Jacinto overtook the Trent, and out of English interest, let her pass on, after having taken the four traitors from her. England, on getting the news, did not punish the Trent, but declared war against America. Her first and immediate measure was actual war. Troops and arms were hurried off to our coast. Instantly men were put in motion to kill us. We were not to learn her spirit from the tone of her diplomatic correspondence on the occasion, but from her military movements. "Action speak louder than words." If a man takes off his coat, and comes towards me with rolled-up sleeves and clenched fists, I shall not be comforted by his words, however far less threatening they may be. I shall still believe that he will whip me if he can. England proposed no explanation, no explanation—would not even wait to learn whether our Government approved the conduct of the San Jacinto. But, with cannon loaded and matches lighted, she stood demanding instant compliance with her peremptory action, or, indeed, any intended action against Slavery. If, instead of making Slavery its special aim, its supreme care, it had used its obvious and unrestricted Constitutional liberty in composing its armies and in carrying on the war, the Rebellion would have been suppressed in less than six months from the bombardment of Sumter. All must admit that the Constitution gives Congress the power to make up its armies as it will—of foreigners or citizens, of black men or white; and that it is under no more Constitutional obligation to enquire whether the men who offer themselves for enlistment are slaves, than whether they are apprentices or hirelings. In the exercise of its power, Congress could both easily and speedily have saved the nation. It is true that incidental to this exercise might have been the destruction of Slavery; but Congress would have been no more responsible for the destruction than the Constitution would have been violated by the exercise. Had only the black population of the land been secured, last Spring, that the North was

its friend, the end, if not indeed the beginning, of Autumn would have witnessed the end of the Rebellion. And this it would have been assured of had there been so much as one black regiment among the seventy-five thousand soldiers whom our President called for last Spring. Not one gun would that regiment have needed to fire, and no occasion would there have been for another black regiment. The bare fact of its existence would have effectually and almost instantly advertised all the blacks of our good will, and to advertise them that would have been sufficient to secure their deep and decisive sympathy. But, alas! the advertisement was forbidden! "And, instead of it, we have advertised them of one ill will by sending back cruelly and wickedly, and also unconstitutionally, great numbers of fugitive slaves."

Such, my dear Sir, was the miserable condition of my poor Slavery-crazed and Slavery-cowed country when your declared war against her. I said that it was keenly interesting in your nation to deny to America the use of American rebels, the liberty which England claims in the case of English rebels. Keen indeed was this insult; and very cruel and mean was the oppression of falling upon us in our helpless condition. For this insult and oppression, England will soon have to answer, unless there shall be good feeling on her part to beg good feeling on ours. Very bad is our feeling toward her now, and even toward Canada. Already are we threatening (very foolishly I own) to terminate that new and mutually useful intercourse with Canada which should be enlarged and unending. Canada and the States should be brothers as well as neighbors.

Vain is the attempt to pacify us by saying that the Trent case has been settled on our own principles. It was not pleasant to have it settled even on our own principles, if we were compelled to have it so settled. Moreover, the compulsion is greatly aggravated by who deny that America to settle them in such circumstances with Foreign Powers. All vain is this attempt to hide, in an affectation of high-souled regard for national consistency, and in a sublime show of magnanimous adherence to precedents, our blinding disgrace in the Trent case. The truth is, that the having of maritime principles is an honor which does not belong to America. Her opposition in her infancy to taking seamen from her ships was on the ground of their being innocent men. But now she opposes the taking from them of even a single sailor, and she is not content with this. Our maritime principles are but our maritime policy; and this has varied with our interests.

Mr. Sumner's admirable Speech on the Trent case is characterized by his usual learning and eloquence, but not with his usual soundness. 1st. Most of the authorities he cites are far too old to express the sentiment of our present policy. 2d. They do not apply to the Trent case—for the subject matter in this is the proper disposition, not of innocent but of guilty persons. They are plainly but to the point of taking innocent seamen from our ships. And most of his remaining authorities were doubtless in favor of the same policy. He thinks that they were also to the point of taking ambassadors from neutral ships. The strong probability, however, is that immunity for seamen was intended by these authorities, although the literal import of their words provides immunity for ambassadors as well for seamen. Moreover, if these authorities were really as well as they are, they would not be so much as to let papers trespass their efforts to destroy us. But we, alas! are so drugged and drunken by Slavery as to feel no right to meet these efforts save in ways strictly harmonious with every line of the Constitution, or (to express but the same meaning in other words) strictly harmonious with the great American Republic. The Constitution is not to be broken, but it is to be used as a weapon of war. Why is it that we do not worship our State Constitutions as well as the Federal Constitution? Every few years we cast them aside. The reason is, that Slavery does not call for the worship of them. Our President is bound hand and foot by that Pro-Slavery regard for the Constitution in which he was elected. And all this in the face of the Queen's proclamation, and in the face, too, of the punishment which the English Government had inflicted for the like offences when we were at war with Mexico. The San Jacinto overtook the Trent, and out of English interest, let her pass on, after having taken the four traitors from her. England, on getting the news, did not punish the Trent, but declared war against America. Her first and immediate measure was actual war. Troops and arms were hurried off to our coast. Instantly men were put in motion to kill us. We were not to learn her spirit from the tone of her diplomatic correspondence on the occasion, but from her military movements. "Action speak louder than words." If a man takes off his coat, and comes towards me with rolled-up sleeves and clenched fists, I shall not be comforted by his words, however far less threatening they may be. I shall still believe that he will whip me if he can. England proposed no explanation, no explanation—would not even wait to learn whether our Government approved the conduct of the San Jacinto. But, with cannon loaded and matches lighted, she stood demanding instant compliance with her peremptory action, or, indeed, any intended action against Slavery. If, instead of making Slavery its special aim, its supreme care, it had used its obvious and unrestricted Constitutional liberty in composing its armies and in carrying on the war, the Rebellion would have been suppressed in less than six months from the bombardment of Sumter. All must admit that the Constitution gives Congress the power to make up its armies as it will—of foreigners or citizens, of black men or white; and that it is under no more Constitutional obligation to enquire whether the men who offer themselves for enlistment are slaves, than whether they are apprentices or hirelings. In the exercise of its power, Congress could both easily and speedily have saved the nation. It is true that incidental to this exercise might have been the destruction of Slavery; but Congress would have been no more responsible for the destruction than the Constitution would have been violated by the exercise. Had only the black population of the land been secured, last Spring, that the North was

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Mr. Sumner's admirable Speech on the Trent case is characterized by his usual learning and eloquence, but not with his usual soundness. 1st. Most of the authorities he cites are far too old to express the sentiment of our present policy. 2d. They do not apply to the Trent case—for the subject matter in this is the proper disposition, not of innocent but of guilty persons. They are plainly but to the point of taking innocent seamen from our ships. And most of his remaining authorities were doubtless in favor of the same policy. He thinks that they were also to the point of taking ambassadors from neutral ships. The strong probability, however, is that immunity for seamen was intended by these authorities, although the literal import of their words provides immunity for ambassadors as well for seamen. Moreover, if these authorities were really as well as they are, they would not be so much as to let papers trespass their efforts to destroy us. But we, alas! are so drugged and drunken by Slavery as to feel no right to meet these efforts save in ways strictly harmonious with every line of the Constitution, or (to express but the same meaning in other words) strictly harmonious with the great American Republic. The Constitution is not to be broken, but it is to be used as a weapon of war. Why is it that we do not worship our State Constitutions as well as the Federal Constitution? Every few years we cast them aside. The reason is, that Slavery does not call for the worship of them. Our President is bound hand and foot by that Pro-Slavery regard for the Constitution in which he was elected. And all this in the face of the Queen's proclamation, and in the face, too, of the punishment which the English Government had inflicted for the like offences when we were at war with Mexico. The San Jacinto overtook the Trent, and out of English interest, let her pass on, after having taken the four traitors from her. England, on getting the news, did not punish the Trent, but declared war against America. Her first and immediate measure was actual war. Troops and arms were hurried off to our coast. Instantly men were put in motion to kill us. We were not to learn her spirit from the tone of her diplomatic correspondence on the occasion, but from her military movements. "Action speak louder than words." If a man takes off his coat, and comes towards me with rolled-up sleeves and clenched fists, I shall not be comforted by his words, however far less threatening they may be. I shall still believe that he will whip me if he can. England proposed no explanation, no explanation—would not even wait to learn whether our Government approved the conduct of the San Jacinto. But, with cannon loaded and matches lighted, she stood demanding instant compliance with her peremptory action, or, indeed, any intended action against Slavery. If, instead of making Slavery its special aim, its supreme care, it had used its obvious and unrestricted Constitutional liberty in composing its armies and in carrying on the war, the Rebellion would have been suppressed in less than six months from the bombardment of Sumter. All must admit that the Constitution gives Congress the power to make up its armies as it will—of foreigners or citizens, of black men or white; and that it is under no more Constitutional obligation to enquire whether the men who offer themselves for enlistment are slaves, than whether they are apprentices or hirelings. In the exercise of its power, Congress could both easily and speedily have saved the nation. It is true that incidental to this exercise might have been the destruction of Slavery; but Congress would have been no more responsible for the destruction than the Constitution would have been violated by the exercise. Had only the black population of the land been secured, last Spring, that the North was

its friend, the end, if not indeed the beginning, of Autumn would have witnessed the end of the Rebellion. And this it would have been assured of had there been so much as one black regiment among the seventy-five thousand soldiers whom our President called for last Spring. Not one gun would that regiment have needed to fire, and no occasion would there have been for another black regiment. The bare fact of its existence would have effectually and almost instantly advertised all the blacks of our good will, and to advertise them that would have been sufficient to secure their deep and decisive sympathy. But, alas! the advertisement was forbidden! "And, instead of it, we have advertised them of one ill will by sending back cruelly and wickedly, and also unconstitutionally, great numbers of fugitive slaves."

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Even the day he died, he requested to have Mr. Garrison's late speech in New York read to him.

His illness, though not of long duration, was of a very distressing character, but was born by him with unaffected cheerfulness and resignation; and he was sustained to the end by a steadfast faith in the immortality of being beyond the tomb. He retained the full possession of his faculties to the last, and, but a few moments before he ceased to breathe, attempted, in feeble accents, the execution of some of the solemn and pathetic strains which had so often constituted the labor and delight of his life.

Fortunate are the mourners whose affection is thus strengthened and sustained by respect.

W. W.

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JOHN S. ROCK,  
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR AT LAW,  
No. 6 TREMONT STREET, - - BOSTON.



to the most intelligent and experienced friends of America in the old world. For sale at the Anti-Slavery Office in Boston, 221 Washington street, Room No. 6. Also in New York, at No. 5 Beekman street; and in Philadelphia, at No. 106 North Tenth street.